RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S CORESPONDENCE WITH KADAMBINI DEVI-HEMANTA BALA DEVI-NIRJHARINI DEVI AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

A

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR INTEGRATED M.PHIL & PH.D

Submited By---

KRISHNA PADA PAL

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Centre for Women's Studies

Vidya-Bhavana , Visva-Bharati

Santiniketan

INTRODUCTION:

My tentative research proposal is " Rabindranath Tagore's Correspondence with Kadambini Devi- Hemantabala Devi- Nirjharini Devi and Women's Liberation". Main focus of my research is 'Chithipatro-Saptam Khando' and 'Chithipatra Nabam-Khondo' and analytical discussion of three women's letters. It will be discussed in my thesis how they will be become an ideal women in their socio-temporal context. Main objective of my thesis is all round development of women regarding education, freedom of speech and thinking, empowerment etc. Which was started from early 18 th century in Bengal. In this way my argument regarding Kadambini Devi, Hemantabala Devi and Nirjharini Devi would be are pioneer of feminism.

Researcher and critiques are hardy choose about this research field. Even regarding this topic literacy materials are rarely found. We can say that, there are some available published documents which will help my research.

Hemanta Bala Devi alias Jonaki, Dakskha Bala, daughter of BrajendraKishore Roychowdhury was born in the year 1894 at 26-Bechu Chatterjee street , Kolkata. Her father, a land lord of Gouripur at Maymonsingha, and mother Ananta Bala Devi were liberal and admirer of poet Rabindranath Tagore. As per the custom of the then society. Hemanta Bala got married at the age of ten with Brajendrakanta, son of the land lord of Rongpur and nephew of Jagadindranath Roy, king of Nator. From her in-laws she had a distant relation with Tagore family. The relationship between Hemanta bala Devi and Rabindranath Tagore was grandfather and granddaughter.

Hemanta Bala had a troubled married life, starting from age of ten to end of her life. Married in a traditional zamindar family , her movement was restricted in the andar mahal only.. The born rebel Hemanta Bala could not adjust with her husband. At the age of fifteen years she became mother and the age of twenty she took initiation in vaishnav dharma from a sadhu ,name Kishorananda. By then she was separated from her husband. For some period of time separation and again reunion continued throughout her life. From her 'teen' she was familiar with Tagore's writings but after her Guru's death Hemanta Bala became closer to Tagore's writings and took refuge in Tagore. In her restless mental situation she read "JOGAJOG", "SHESHER KOBITA"and identified herself with the heroin Kumu of Jogajog. Though, Hemanta Bala was not educated in general sense of the term, she was educated in a special sense and openness of her mind and love for literature finally made her a poet and a writer.

Biography in brief of specific three women:-

Hemanta Bala, Kadambini and Nirjharini Devi were neither a family member of Tagore nor a devotee in the strict sense of the term at the beginning .But, gradually through exchange of letters and meetings they came closer to Tagore. A description of Hemanta Bala meetings with Tagore shows the condition of the then hindu society. Her reminiscences of meeting with Tagore were really interesting and hilarious. From this correspondence the religious idea of Tagore becomes clear and distinct. His revolt against untouchablity pomp and granduer of Hindu worship are clearly expressed. Hemanta Bala's debate with Tagore was interesting. But more interesting is the transformation of a woman under 'Purdha' and her blooming into a flower. At the end of her life she turned to be a non-believer of any ritualistic orthodox religion. In her lonely days in the last lap of her life in Puri her only companion was Tagore's 'Geetabitan' and "Santiniketan '.We find in her letters and appeal to poet to be her 'Guru', show her the path of realization.

Kadambini Devi (1878-1943), full name is Kadambini Dutta. She was an elder daughter of Mahim Chandra Sarkar. She started her marriage life at early adolescence stage, in the year of 1891. The name of the Groom was Prangopal Dutta. Few days after her marriage her husband passed away. She spent a painful widowhood. At this time creation of Rabindranath and spirituality provider her shelter. At this point there is similarity between hersef and Hemanta Bala.

Nirjharini Devi, wife of Prafulla Kumar sarkar. Who was the founder editor of 'AnandaBazar Patrika'. And her mother Sarala Bala was an ideal woman in her socio –temporal context. She was the nearest and closest student of Sister Nivedita. Nirjharini Devi was a radical freedom fighter and also an honest social activist. She also became closer to Tagore's writings.

CAME UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE:-

While engrossed in reading the Tagore's writings , Hemanta Bala found solace and there grew a desire in her to write letters to Tagore to get acquainted with him. Tagore was famous for replying letters of his admirers and this proved to be true in Hemanta's case also.She received reply within a few days. Then started flow of letters from both sides. Tagore wrote

264 letters to Hemanta Bala, and may be more number of letters from Hemanta Bala to Tagore. Hemanta bala was one of the four women recipients' of Tagore's large number of letters. The others are Indira Devi , Ranu Adhikary, later she became lady Ranu Mukharjee and Rani Mahalanbish. Next are Kadambini Dutta and Nirjharini Sarkar. Rabindranath worte 95 letters to Kadambini Devi and 24 etters to Nirjharini Devi. The number of letters is so small number from other sending letters by Tagore, but these letters are so thought provoking from other's letters. Exchange of letters between Rabindranath and Hemanta Bala lasted for eleven years. Starting from 1930 to 1941 the last days of Tagore. From these letters we find different sides of the myriad minded poet. And exchange of letters between Rabindranath and Kadambini Devi lasted for twenty eight years, from year of 1903 to 1931. Twenty eight years(1908-1936) also letter-relationship between Rabindranath and Nirjharini Devi.

These letters were mostly on religious issues. Hemanta Bala was a staunch Hindu a devotee of vaisnava faith, believer and follower of all kinds of rituals .On the other hand Tagore was against all ritualism . A liberal man his religion was the religion of man, a true lover of humanity.

The letters between two opposite characters are interesting. Some letters are humorous, and personal in nature, some letters are related with the critics of Tagore. The first four letters of Hemanta Bala carry her pseudonym 'Jonaki' and 'Daksha Bala'. And interestingly in santiniketan these were kept in 'Pagla file'. Gradually, poet realized the potentiality of Hemanta Bala and the letters of 'Pagla file" were shifted to another file "Hemanta Bala and Rabindranath correspondence" .

SCOPE AND RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH:-

Through reading their letters, the prominent feature which we can stress is the conflict of ideas of Tagore and the ideas of three women. One that is constructed by society and other which is self judgment of their point of view that grew up within themself. We have a particular belief in an ideology that is guided by the person. For this context, each woman has an individual religious belief which is inherent in her. For this reason she can differ herself to other. But in the patriarchal system of our society, this inherent quality of woman is considered as valueless. However the main focus of my argument is that the creative ideas of woman are cramped by the rules and regulation that is created by patriarchy. So, we don't

allow their own thoughts rather we are imposing the rules and laws that already created by our society. So, we can say that this kind of system is a very obstructive to woman's emancipation and also equally harmful to their empowerment, capability and development. Above all this subject matter focuses the point of paralysed condition of woman in society.

It is not true that the patriarchal system of our society is responsible for absence of all round development and empowerment of woman. Because, so many countries where development of woman had not been possible in sprite of matriarchy of those country. The similar picture of woman's development does not found still in India where matriarchy is going on. So, I will discuss about this issue elaborately to my research work. Here, I am talking about the relevance of exchanging letters between Rabindranath and specify three women. Because, their were belongs to the category of an ordinary woman. In this context like an ordinary womon of our society, sometimes they accept all the barrier and restriction of societal norms. Most of the times she rejected to accept the rules and restrictions imposed upon them. Those rules became obstruction to them; they can't freely express their personal view. In this context we can differ them from other women. They were free minded and freely expressed their opinion without any hesitation. But it is very interesting to point out that they were not radical thinker or autocratic except Nirjharini devi. They were self guided and was not orthodox free to accept the others' view and opinion. We know that there are three levels of power of women's development. Firstly, in the stage of maidenhood she acquires the potential accumulation of power. Then comes womanhood where we noticed development of their power. At the last stage they achieve the realization of motherhood and where they flourish their power. From this perspective we can judge the three ideal women explored their through self development among these three levels. It is very clear that the three women came at the ultimate level of women's empowerment relating to societal norms and barrier religion – literature. And thus she came to the very close proximity of Tagore.

In spite of being daughter-in-law and daughter of a land lord, Hemanta Bala had to face many struggles in life and has to cross the hardship of life. So, as per as she can be considered the pioneer of woman emancipation. Neither she was not confined within curtain system nor was she truly entrapped into familial bonding. She became bride in early childhood, was devotee in womanhood and the last stage of her life, the religious curiosity made her restless. And she began to lead her life like a nun. We can portray the picture of women's condition of the the then society through her way of life. Side by side devotion in literature pursuit in music and love towards birds are the subject matter which will be another important focal point of my

research. So, the main point of my research is the empowerment, respect, the all-round development of woman which traditionally comes from the last two and half decades of centuries. Hemanta Bala Devi is pioneer of this kind of tradition. In this way Kadambini devi and Nirjharini Devi was the pioneer of their time and place. To analyses this very interesting subject matter, I have chosen this topic as my research work. Lastly, regarding this topic there are only a few books and materials, which I mentioned before. The most important literature is the correspondence which would be helps me as research materials for fulfilling the purpose of my research.

CHAPTER DIVISSION:

Tentative chapter division of my research—

● Introduction

1. 19th century renaissance and Bengal: A brief survey

2. Women's emancipation in 19th century Bengal

3. Tagore's view of women's emancipation

4. Kadambini, Nirjharini and Hemanta Bala: A brief History

5. Correspondence of Tagore with Kadambini

6. Correspondence of Tagore with Nirjharini

7. Correspondence of Tagore with Hemanta Bala

● Conclusion

SURVEY OF LITERATURE:

Researcher and critiques are hardly choosing about this research field. Even, regarding this topic literacy materials are rarely found. We can say that, there are some available published documents which will help my research. Among those " Hemanta Bala Devir rachona samkalon"(1991) edited by Jashodhara Bagchi and Avijit Sen, is the vital resource for my research work. This book is a collection of some vital letters of Hemanta Bala. There are

some critical and analytical discussions of those letters. This book describes her (Hemanta bala Devi) life style as well as her compilation of essay with its brief description. The editorial portion of this book is very thought provoking. In these section editors has depicted a short life- sketch of Hemanta bala Devi.

It added a essay named " Aamar Maa" (My Mother) by Basanti Bagchi, after the editorial portion which is a basically story is collected through memory. It also talks about the familial concern reading Hemanta Bala Devi. It also deals with her religious matter. It provokes us about her deep attraction about music and ethical tradition. It introduces the first meetings between Tagore and Hemanta Bala. On the other hand she kept a healthy relationship with " Bharat Sangeet Sangha", on the other hand she kept a good relationship with freedom fighter, Priti Das too. Thus, we can get a clear picture of collaboration between " Bharat Sangeet Sangha" & freedom fighter.

Thereafter, Rabindranath Tagore was not only 'Jiban Devota' of Hemanta Bala. But she was highly influenced by his idealism. She established ' Rabibortika'(A centre for practicing literature & music) to spread Tagore idealism throughout the nation. We can find all these aspects in this editorial section.

The essay " Hemanta Bala" written by Jayanti Sannyal, grand daughter of Hemanta Bala Devi, was added later portion of the editorial coloum. Crisis time of Hemanta Bala devi was analyzed by writer after the death of Rabindranath. She depicted the picture of her life which was full of poverty; through she was daughter and daughter-in-law of rich land-lord. We coe to know about her last days of life which was pathetic.

I hope this book will be considered fundamental resource materials regarding my research. One of the most important book is" Kobike lekha Chithi" (Aug.1999) edited by Debnath Bandhopadhay and Jayanti Sannyal. This book also the collection of Hemanta Bala's letters. And also "Chithipotro Nabom khando" (1968) and "Chithi patro Saptam Khando" of Rabindranath Tagore are the raw materials of my research.

METHODOLOGY:

This study will be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Firstly, in-depth interview will be conducted among the relatives of three women. And my study also conducted using literary methodology. Literary methodology is based on primary and secondary sources. A primary source provides first-hand information on the topic. The author or artist personally participated in the event under discussion, such as a science experiment, a humanitarian mission, or the creation of a work of art. The work has not been changed or analyzed by another person or organization. Example of primary sources are government records (like- parliamentary proceedings, Bills, Acts), archeologically digs etc.

Secondary sources are so important for this study. The secondary sources present an arguments, interpretation, conclusion, or summary based upon information found in primary sources. Secondary source are like- A Biography, A Review (of a book, film), commentary and criticism (of a work of music or a work of art) and Histories.

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